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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
Seventeenth session
7-25 July 1997

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS SEVENTEENTH SESSION

Rapporteur: Ms. Aurora JAVATE DE DIOS

Addendum

III. REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON ON THE ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BETWEEN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH SESSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

1. The Chairperson of the Committee noted that most of her activities between the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Committee had consisted of participating in seminars on the Convention organized by non-governmental organizations. The only United Nations meeting she had attended was the forty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which was of particular importance because of the parallel open-ended working group on the draft optional protocol to the Convention.

2. The Chairperson informed the Committee that throughout its meetings, the open-ended working group had been appreciative of comments and replies to questions by Ms. Silvia Cartwright, who had participated as a resource person on behalf of the Committee.

3. The Chairperson stated that the Committee had not been directly represented during the Commission on Human Rights, but that Ms. Ivanka Corti had attended in her capacity as Chairperson of the meeting of persons chairing human rights treaty bodies. The Chairperson suggested that in the future the Committee should be represented independently.

4. The Chairperson described the various meetings of non-governmental organizations in which she had participated. From 8 to 10 April 1997, she had attended an international roundtable held at Amman, entitled "Equal

Opportunities for Women: A Question of Rights and Humanity", convened by the London-based Rights and Humanity Group. On 8 and 9 May 1997, she had attended a roundtable at New Delhi on "United Nations Reforms Good Governance and Civil Society", organized jointly by the Commission on Global Governance, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and Women's Feature Services. From 23 to 28 February, she had visited the Islamic Republic of Iran at the invitation of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and had addressed the Women's Solidarity Association of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the Convention and the role and responsibility of the Committee and States parties to the Convention in relation to the human and social rights of women. She had visited the Republic of South Africa from 25 to 31 May 1997, at the invitation of the National Institute for Public Interest Laws and Research, sharing her experiences of training in her own country with respect to the Committee, and giving briefings on the working procedures of the Committee.

5. The Chairperson reminded members that the Committee had adopted general recommendation No. 23 on articles 7 and 8 at its sixteenth session. She pointed out that various members of the Committee had suggested that new procedures were necessary for the adoption of general recommendations, as was the development by the Committee of a long-term programme of work for general recommendations. She informed the Committee that Ms. Carmel Shalev had proposed that the Committee begin work on a general recommendation on article 12 relating to women's health.

6. The Chairperson recalled that the Committee had decided at its sixteenth session to continue the review of its rules of procedure at the seventeenth session.

7. Ms. Cartwright, the representative of the Committee as resource person to the open-ended working group of the Commission on the Status of Women on the draft optional protocol to the Convention, noted that support for the proposed optional protocol to the Convention, which would provide for the right to petition the Committee, had gained momentum since 1996. She had noted broad support for the inclusion of an inquiry procedure in the protocol. Ms. Cartwright indicated that there remained major issues to be considered by the working group, including the question of who should be entitled to lodge complaints with the Committee under any protocol and the resource implications of any protocol. She suggested that the work under any optional protocol should be conducted by a designated sub-group of Committee experts and that the Committee begin to consider working methods and procedures that would be employed when the protocol entered into force. Ms. Cartwright requested the Secretariat to provide the Committee with a report relating to the procedures of the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee against Torture with regard to their communications procedures and suggested that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women consider appropriate procedures for an optional protocol at its nineteenth session.

8. Ms. Corti indicated that she had attended the fifty-third session of the Commission on Human Rights in her capacity of chairperson of the meeting of persons chairing human rights treaty bodies. She had also had attended the third meeting of the special rapporteurs/representatives/experts and chairmen of working groups of the special procedures and the advisory services programme of

the Commission on Human Rights (meeting of human rights special procedures) in May 1996, in the same capacity. Ms. Corti underlined the importance of the treaty bodies, and particularly the Committee, within the human rights framework and suggested that the Commission on Human Rights should give more prominence to the role of these bodies. Ms. Corti also suggested that the Committee should further develop its links with the Centre for Human Rights and take steps to develop a closer relationship with the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences.